About LEVEL news

Contents

Late July Rain Helps Lake Levels

Thunder Storms Bring Mysterious Events

Middle Lakes Still Above Average

Flow Tests Deferred

Lake St. Lawrence Remains Higher

Shore Buyers Guide Soon To Be Ready

July Precipitation

Water Levels for the Great Lakes and Montreal Harbour *... a monthly bulletin from Canadian Hydrographic Service*

About the monthly Water Level bulletin

July Precipitation Over the Great Lakes

As a percentage of the long-term July average:

Great Lakes Basin	91%
Lake Erie (including Lake St. Clair)	66%
Lake Superior	102%
Lakes Michigan-Huron	90%

LEVEL news

Great Lakes - St. Lawrence River Water Levels

Volume 3, Number 8 **August 9, 1995**

Lakes Superior and Ontario Improve

Late July Rain Helps Lake Levels

Rainfall on Lakes Superior and Ontario in July brought some relief to low water level problems.

Both lakes remain below their levels recorded at the same time last year, but Lake Superior's level rose by 10 cm in July, and Lake Ontario's level remained stable rather than falling as it usually does this time of year.

Environment Canada's Cornwall and Burlington offices have been receiving telephone calls through the spring and summer from people expressing concern about low water levels on both Lakes Superior and Ontario.

"The rain that started in mid-July was a welcome relief," says Peter Yee of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Regulation Office in Cornwall.

"But, we remind recreational boaters to watch the water levels closely. Be aware that as water levels recede in the late summer and early fall, you may have problems accessing boat slips and docks."

Thunder Storms Bring Mysterious Events

Shoreline observers from Goderich on Lake Huron and Corunna on the St. Clair River reported seeing water levels rise and fall by between one and two metres during the intense thunder storms that battered the Great Lakes on the evening of July 13.

Gauge records indicate that water levels rose and fell by up to 1.5 metres between 6 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. Actual fluctuations may have been larger but might not have been captured in preliminary gauge data, which contain readings at 15 minute intervals. Records from Gros Cap on Lake Superior show a drop in the local water level, followed by a rise between 3:15 and 5:15 p.m. on the same day. The total fluctuation was 88 cm. Around the same time at Sault Ste. Marie above the locks, the water level rose and fell by nearly 2 metres in all.

These events coincided with a band of compact, fast-moving thunder storms that ripped across the Great Lakes from the northwest to the southeast on July

Lake Ontario 95%

Note: These figures are preliminary.

Last Issue

Next Issue

Issue Index

13. The storms came ashore in Southern Ontario around 5:45 p.m. The Sarnia Weather Office reported that winds reached peak gusts of 47 knots between 5:50 and 6:30 p.m. The average wind speed was 30 knots.

Despite the high winds, it is unlikely that wind alone was the cause of the dramatic water level fluctuations. Surges - or wind set-up - usually require longer time periods to develop. It is more likely that the strange ups and downs of water levels on Lakes Superior, Lake Huron and the St. Clair River were caused by dramatic changes in barometric pressure that accompanied the thunder storms.

Summary information for "LEVEL*news*"

Middle Lakes Still Above Average

Lakes Michigan-Huron are at their long-term average level for the time of year. Lakes St. Clair and Erie remain between 15 and 20 cm above their averages. All of the lakes are below their levels of a year ago.

July rain boosted Lake Ontario's water supply. This, coupled with low outflows prescribed by the lake's regulation plan, helped levels recover from a low of 20 cm below average in May to a near average level in August.

Montréal Harbour was below chart datum for four days in July, but by month's end it had risen to 25 cm above.

Flow Tests Deferred

Field tests aimed at improving fish habitat in the St. Marys River rapids have been postponed until 1996. Last month, we mentioned that the St. Marys River Remedial Action Plan (RAP) hoped to carry out the tests this summer with the co-operation of the International Lake Superior Board of Control.

Lake St. Lawrence Remains Higher

Water levels in the upper and lower St. Lawrence River continued below average in July. Meanwhile, the water level on Lake St. Lawrence, the artificial lake immediately upstream of the power dam at Cornwall, remained higher than average. This situation will likely continue well into August.

Assuming average water supplies for the next six months, Lake Superior's level is forecast to continue rising until September. Lakes Michigan-Huron, St. Clair and Erie are believed to have reached their seasonal peaks and are expected to begin their seasonal declines. A gradual decline in Lake Ontario's level is expected for the rest of this year.

Shore Buyers Guide Soon To Be Ready

The Information & Geomatics Office of Environment Canada and the Conservation Authorities of Ontario have combined efforts to produce a Buyers

Guide to Lakeshore Property, which will soon be available for purchase.

The 12-page, illustrated booklet gives prospective shoreline buyers hints for finding that ideal lakeshore location.

"Our experience over the years has been that many shoreline property owners make purchases without knowing that they are exposing themselves to risks," explains Ralph Moulton, Manager of the Information & Geomatics Office.

"This booklet attempts to give prospective buyers the basics to making informed decisions. It tells them how to find out if a property is in a hazard area and gives them pointers on warning signs that indicate whether a particular property is subject to flooding or erosion."

Contact your nearest Conservation Authority or the Information & Geomatics Office for information on how to obtain a copy. Quantities will be available to organizations on a cost recovery basis.

Top of Page
Français | Contact Us | Help | Search | Canada Site
What's New | Topics | Publications | Weather | Home | About Us

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